National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Principal Center for Regulatory Risk Analysis and Communication

REGULATORY ALERT
Interim Health Advisory
Perchlorate in Drinking Water

This information was prepared by NASA's Principal Center for Regulatory Risk Analysis and Communication (RRAC). An archive of regulatory alerts, summaries and other information is posted on the website. If you have further questions and/or need assistance with this matter, please contact the RRAC PC Manager, Sharon Scroggins (256-544-7932, sharon.scroggins@nasa.gov).

Date [Citation]: 8 January 2009

Regulatory Agency: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Rulemaking Type: Interim Health Advisory

Title: EPA Seeks Advice on Perchlorate in Drinking Water: Agency Issues Interim Health Advisory

Summary:

On 8 January 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an interim health advisory of 15 parts per billion (ppb) to assist state and local officials in addressing local contamination in drinking water. This interim health advisory of 15 ppb also replaces the existing preliminary remediation goal of 24.5 ppb (established in 2006, EPA Memorandum 26 January 2006) used to establish cleanup levels for perchlorate at Superfund sites. The advisory level is based on earlier recommendations by the National Research Council, which functions under the National Academy of Sciences. States have the right to establish and enforce drinking water standards and EPA encourages state-specific situations to be addressed at the local level. EPA expects to issue a final health advisory concurrent with the final regulatory determination for perchlorate.

Perchlorate occurs naturally in soil. It also is found in the environment due to past and present use in materials such as rocket fuels, explosives, and fireworks. On 10 October 2008, EPA issued a preliminary determination for perchlorate in the *Federal Register* (73 FR 60262) stating that there was not a "meaningful opportunity for health risk reduction" through a national drinking water regulation. EPA received more than 32,000 comments on the notice and is now requesting additional input before making a final regulatory determination on whether to issue a national regulation for perchlorate in drinking water.

Potential Impacts to NASA:

NASA uses perchlorate materials predominately as a component of energetics such as solid propellants for rockets. Perchlorate is highly soluble in water, making it mobile in both surface and groundwater, and humans may be exposed to perchlorate primarily through drinking water or through consuming food irrigated with water containing the chemical. Elevated levels of perchlorate have been detected in groundwater, surface water, and soil.

Although a health advisory is not a federally enforceable standard, it could lead to a future national drinking water regulation that would require affected Centers to take steps to remediate the perchlorate in the environment. Centers that have or suspect levels of perchlorate contamination above the 15-ppb threshold should contact Sharon Scroggins.

Additional Information: http://www.epa.gov/safewater/contaminants/unregulated/perchlorate.html